



# Health Info



City of Chicago  
Mayor Rahm Emanuel

**Communicable Disease Program**

Chicago Department of Public Health  
Bechara Choucair, MD, Commissioner

## FACT SHEET: **BAT SAFETY**

Bats in and around Chicago have been found to carry rabies. Rabies is a rare but fatal disease caused by the bite of an infected (rabid) animal. Not all bats carry rabies; however, it is important to be aware of this risk and to take precautions to protect yourself and your family from possible exposure.

### Exposures of concern for rabies transmission:

- If someone is bitten or scratched by a bat
- If infectious material (such as saliva) from a bat gets into a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound
- If any physical contact with a bat has occurred
- If you awaken and find a bat in your room or if a bat is seen in the room of a sleeping person
- If a bat is found in the room of an unattended child
- If a bat is seen near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person
- If a bat is found near an unattended pet

**NOTE:** Bats have very small teeth. Therefore, a bite from a bat may not be felt and may leave marks that are not easily seen.

### Immediate actions to take:

- If a bite or scratch has occurred, wash the exposed area thoroughly with soap and water and get medical advice immediately—from your physician or an emergency department.
- Whenever possible, the bat should be captured and sent to a laboratory for rabies testing (see below).
- Report all bat exposures to Chicago Department of Public Health. Call 311 (312-744-5000) if calling from a non-Chicago area code) to make this report.
- If your pet is exposed to a bat, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible.

### What to do with the bat:

- Never touch or otherwise handle a bat with your bare hands.
- If there is any question of exposure (as described above), call Animal Care and Control for assistance in capturing the bat. Animal Care and Control will make arrangements for the bat to be tested for rabies.
- In Chicago, Animal Care and Control may be reached by calling 311. For locations outside of Chicago, request assistance from the local authorities.
- If it can be done safely (i.e. without touching the bat), try to confine the bat to increase the chance that it will be captured by Animal Care and Control.
- If you are certain that no human or pet exposure (as described above) has occurred, confine the bat to a room by closing all doors and windows leading out of the room except those to the outside. The bat will probably leave soon. If not, call Animal Care and Control to remove the bat.

### What to do if an exposure has occurred and the bat is not available for testing:

- Depending on the nature of the exposure, you may need to receive preventive treatment for rabies regardless of whether the bat is available for testing.
- This decision should be made by your physician or a representative from the Department of Public Health.

**For more information:** <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>